

December 3, 2019

George Arlotto, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools
Anne Arundel County Public Schools
2644 Riva Road
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Our son Bowen Levy

Dear Dr. Arlotto:

It has now been 28 days since our 17 year-old son, Bowen, had to be airlifted to Children's Hospital Center, after choking on a glove at Central Special. He died 5 days later. We have been told that he may have been without oxygen for at least ten minutes but no one has given us any information to verify or support this. No one in the school system has explained to us how this happened or why it was allowed to happen. To be even more specific, no one from our County has even contacted us or communicated a single word in these 4 agonizing weeks about what happened to our son.

Bowen was profoundly affected by Autism. His disabilities, including a diagnosed and documented compulsion to swallow things (Pica), were clearly delineated in his IEP. The school system was well aware of this diagnosis and the serious risk it posed to him. They failed in their promise to keep him safe.

When we met with the school system in 2016 for the sole reason of addressing the amount of supervision and attention that Bowen needed versus what he was receiving, they made us a written promise guaranteeing him 1:1 full-time supervision to protect him. The system broke that promise to us. He did not have 1:1 supervision since school opened in September.

When we questioned why his IEP was not being followed, we were told by Central Special that the school system could not attract qualified staff to provide this supervision because the County refuses to pay competitive salaries for aides. This appears to be part of a larger failure to provide adequate resources to our special schools.

We want answers now. Why are the details of his death being kept from us? Why did Bowen die? What happened? How could this have happened? Where was the supervision on November 5th? Why didn't he have the promised 1:1 aide watching him that day? What is the school system going to do to make sure this never happens to another special needs child?

How long had the 1:1 position been vacant? How many other special education staff positions are vacant in the County? And why doesn't the County pay enough to keep these critical positions filled? How many other special needs children are without supervision?

All of these questions need to be investigated. The school system cannot and should not investigate itself. We call upon the School Board to commission an independent, outside investigation on how Bowen died and why he did not have 1:1 supervision on November 5th.

Please do not hide behind educational or medical privacy laws. As Bowen's parents, my wife and I authorize you to make this information public. We have a right to know. The other parents in this county who are also entrusting you to keep their children safe have a right to know.

Sincerely,

Bryan Levy

cc: County Executive Steuart Pittman, Jr.
Members of the Board of Education
Members of the Anne Arundel Delegation
Members of the County Council